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UNIVERSITAS HOMINUM; OR, THE UNITY OF HISTORY.

FOR those who must shortly quit the scene of life, it is an allowable desire to suggest what may be of use to persons who have in prospect a longer tenure ; what may promote thrift and obviate waste in the matter of mental effort ; what may help to invest thought with unity and method, to bring the various and separated movements of growing minds into relation with one another, and to give them their places as portions of the general scheme of life. The old are but too conscious, in retrospect, that their own path of life is a path strewn all along with waste material, and it can hardly be otherwise than seemly and appropriate for them to wish that those who follow them in the long procession of the human race may make fuller profit of their means and opportunities. Like the divine ideal of the human form, ever present to the mind of the Greek artist, the vocation of man is one greater than he can fulfill ; but the unattainable is itself a means of attaining, if it leads and empowers us, as it did him, to reach a point in the scale of progress of which we must otherwise have fallen short.

And it will tend to give this subjective unity to study, in its largest sense, if there be a corresponding objective unity in that

field where study finds its highest and most fruitful employment, namely, in man and in the world considered with respect to man; for the plan of the world, material and moral, seen and unseen, is adjusted and subordinated to man and to the fulfillment of his destinies, girt about, it is true, with speculative problems, which none ever have solved and perhaps none ever will, but yet in itself large, stirring, profound, and fruitful, so that we can in some degree understand why it is said that this little earth, and what passes upon it, may form a spectacle to men and angels; a lesson of wonder, of sympathy, and it may be of warning, to orders of being besides and beyond our own.

Torn and defaced as is the ideal of our race, yet have there not been, and are there not, things in man, in his frame, and in his soul and intellect, which, taken at their height, are so beautiful, so good, so great, as to suggest an inward questioning, how far creative power itself can go beyond what, in these elect specimens, it has exhibited? Not that such a questioning is to be answered; it is only warrantable as expansion, not as limitation, as a mode of conveying that what has been actually shown us, what our eyes have seen and our hands have handled, would, but for experience, have been far beyond the powers of our poor conception to reach; that humanity itself, deeply considered, touches the bounds of the superhuman.

And if this chequered picture may be designed to give instruction beyond our borders, then we may safely believe that, both in its parts and as a whole, it is so designed for ourselves; for ourselves in the first instance, and perhaps in the first degree. Whatever be the place of actual man, the place of potential man in the hierarchy of creation is a very high one.

In a survey, necessarily brief and slight, as well as wide, much must be left without notice, and those materials only can be touched which are associated with the highest recorded evolution of man in history; with what is sometimes termed the Caucasian family, or with that portion of the human race which is now within the precinct of the Christian civilization. Among attempts to exhibit the known universe and its great inhabitant, collective man, as an unity, the attempt of Homer, in the *Shield of Achilles*,* made familiar to the British eye through the elab-

* II., XVIII., 478-608.

orate work of Flaxman, is perhaps the oldest. Perhaps, also, it remains unsurpassed in simplicity, in splendor, or in its approach, not indeed to exactitude, but to completeness within its own limits. It comprises all the chief of what the eye beheld, earth and heaven, land and sea, and the great bounding Ocean-River, and all the chief of what experience arrayed upon the stage of life. We have there Peace and War ; both, as things then stood, alike requisite, alike normal. Peace, alternating between joy, exhibited in the festivity of marriage, and contention in the suit before the judges ; or again, marriage, the provision for individual life ; judgment, as the bond of political association. Then we have War in its three great Homeric forms of the siege, the ambush, and the battle. Next are presented to us seed time and harvest ; the vintage brings in song with measured movement, the herd at pasture introduces the hunt, and the flocks the milder cares of the shepherd. Finally, art and the bard are glorified by a picture, "such as Daidelos made for Ariadne," of a brilliant dance, with music to which tumblers also adapt their feats. Gods are present in the battle, and the Homeric poems exhibit largely what Dr. Caird calls "the religion of common life;" but there is no separate or professional representation of any sacred function.

This picture of the human and mundane unity, exhibited in simultaneous, not successive, presentment, stands, I think, apart from all others in the frame of its conception. With it, however, may be compared, but only in one point of view, the great work of Dante. The *Divina Commedia* presents to us again the human unity, not under the burden of the flesh, but after its release, and only as summed up in the cardinal determining fact of its relation to God in Christ. This also may be termed a simultaneous presentment, since it exhibits the whole Providential order, outside the boundaries of this life, as conceived to exist at a given point of time and place, though the journey of the Poet in a specified number of days is the thread on which it hangs, and though its plan allows by way of incident the introduction of history no less than theology and metaphysics. The change of scene from the one world to the other corresponds with the transplantation since the Advent of the chief concern and interest of man : "for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."*

* Col. iii. 3.

In the world of action the human unity has variously figured as an idea in the eyes of towering ambition. The wars of those great empires, which have been termed prehistoric, appear to have been inspired by the design of universal dominion. This becomes more distinct when Persia has obtained the general possession of the Asiatic field. The same idea is stirred by way of reaction in the mind of Greece when she moves against the Great King. It buds in the expeditions of the Ten Thousand and of King Agesilaos ; it blossoms in the vast conquests of Alexander, prepared by the initiatory operations of his father Philip upon the Greek race and territory. It becomes a law of existence to the matured Roman State and Empire, where the conflicts of the most daring personal aims are inextricably mingled with the establishment of the world-wide dominion. After the foundation of Constantinople, it is partly divided, partly transferred. With the establishment of the German Empire, it undergoes, for the West, revival and development. It is relatively strengthened at one epoch, when positively it is about to lose ground by the disastrous fall of Constantinople. The shadow of this aspiring grandeur hangs round Vienna until the title is finally quenched in 1804, through the disastrous wars with France.

In a more vulgar and less historic form, the notion is recalled in Louis XIV., named, but probably misnamed, the great ; and once more by the colossal figure and performance of Napoleon. The more recent course of history does not favor the notion of its reappearance. But while the possibilities of a political unity have receded into the distance, there have been fragmentary manifestations, mixed and often questionable in their character, of an initiatory substitute for it in the collective action of the great European powers ; and some real progress, favored by the new facilities of trade and communication, has been made toward a great unity of human consent, by the formation of a common judgment among civilized mankind under the name of the Law of Nations, upon many matters that touch the liberty, morality, and well being of man. And there also lies in the far distance a prospect, attractive to all Americans and Englishmen, the prospect of a powerful and perhaps paramount moral influence which may accrue, unsought, to the great English-speaking race, before another century has passed, through the ever growing preponderance of its numbers, joined with its penetrating and unresting

energies, both in mental and in material things. The English speakers of the world have multiplied perhaps sevenfold in the last hundred years. They now exceed one hundred millions. Continuing to multiply at the same rate they would after another century pass seven hundred millions.*

By the side of this current of political endeavor and device there have been some parallel manifestations in the world of thought. The character of Achilles represents the effort of the sire of poets to project into form the ideal man; and the motherhood of a goddess, which brings him into the world, is probably referable to the same impulsion as that which prompted the artists of classical Greece to travel

Along the line of limitless desires,†

and to aspire in the human after the divine. When the great Christian literature of the middle ages dawned upon the world, this search for the ideal, as a typical and all-embracing unity, became a standing law. It is nowhere, perhaps, so boldly set up as in the single line of Pulci:‡

Un Dio, ed una Fede, ed uno Orlando.

The noblest developments of the conception are in Orlando and in Arthur; and we have to observe that the aim distinctly is, not the mere exhibition of a hero, but the presentation of the typical and ideal man, the man who collects and integrates within himself all of our nature that is glorious and noble. I suppose that, upon a somewhat lower level, the principle of construction is the same in the character of the Cid, and even in the Siegfried of the Nibelungenlied. This luminous erection cast its backward rays upon antiquity, where it sought for an analogue. Refracted through the discolored medium of the Roman tradition, it illuminated the figure of Hector, lifted him into a place "a world too wide" for him, and glorified him as the ideal man.

While the Christian literature was thus essaying to fulfill the aspirations of the world for a type of unity and perfection, Dante, in the *De Monarchia*, compacted a framework in which human affairs

* Mr. Barham Zinche has estimated them for that date at a thousand millions.

† Wordsworth, Excursion.

‡ Morgante Maggiore.

were to be adjusted in one normal order. Denying to the Church the right or capacity of property, he gave spiritual power to the Pope, and temporal power to the Emperor, each in theory independent of the other, each universal, and each established once for all to fulfill a charge co-extensive with the estimated doctrines of the species. But this succinct statement is only a safe one, especially as regards the Popedom, if taken to illustrate the poet's view of the naked or theoretic basis upon which, in the affairs of both worlds, an unity was provided for the human race.

I think we cannot doubt that this distinctive tendency of the Christian literature was due to the Advent of our Saviour; and that from the exhibition in the world of the one absolute Perfection, there resulted a legitimate desire and tendency to embody, on the same basis of oneness, imitated forms, adapted to the conditions of common life, and modified according to the specific qualities of the various portions of the human family.

These, then, were tendencies, in idea or in act, to find or make an unity of man; of man individual and of man associated. But we have yet to trace the links of a more comprehensive design pervading history, from its first beginnings, which bore the promise of a larger provision for the same end. Yet this provision was, in its inception, so modest, so like the flowers that are "born to blush unseen," and the gems of the "dark, unfathomed cave," that through thousands of years, while human genius, intellect, and statecraft rose to their climax in the grander theatres of life, it made no mark whatever upon the great central tissue of human history. For even the conquests of David, and the opulence and splendor of Solomon, failed to lift into any wide notoriety the annals of the Jewish race. Yet there, and there only, was the guardianship of a seed that would one day burst its husk; would expand into forces which were to gather up around themselves, and to array in their service all other elements of power; and would integrate, if not the world so far as present experience has advanced, yet the most choice, capable, and dominant races of the world.

It is obvious that outside that course of human history which has culminated in modern Christendom, there have lain at all times great masses of humanity, most of them having but few points of contact with it. That Mahometanism at one time contended with the Gospel for a real sovereignty of the world;

that the Buddhists, taken at four hundred millions, may roughly be stated to be as numerous as Christians; that the Olympian religion was a marvelous phenomenon, transitory, indeed, but with a lease, so to speak, of fifteen centuries; that there are other cults and systems of high interest and importance; that missionary progress has been slow and intermittent; all these facts in no way detract from the main proposition.

Let me not, however, be supposed to imply that these great outlying tracts of human life were excluded from the care of the Almighty Father. What treasures of true piety, what devotion to duty, what negation of self may have been reared within the field of religions less favored than our own, is a question which may well wait for final elucidation from the All-just and All-wise. My proposition does not go beyond affirming that these extraneous masses, weighty as they are, lie apart from the central thread which runs through the entire tissue of the destinies of the race.

There is one scheme, and one only, which tends and has tended for eighteen hundred years to centrality and universality, which carries on its forehead the notes of an imperial power; which is now felt at every point where human breath is drawn; which is far indeed from having accomplished its work, and which has within it partial and sometimes formidable signs of disintegration; but which holds the field, holds it with ever growing hope and effort, and holds it without a rival. That is the Christian scheme.

Let us now look to the Hebrew traditions, known to us as the Sacred Scriptures. I forbear to lay stress for the present purpose upon the fragmentary, but strong, support which they derive from ancient religion and history, especially through the results of archæological research. In these precious records, we, the Adamic race, are assured of the unity of our origin, of our special relation to the Creator, of the entrance into the world, by disobedience, of a widespread moral ruin, and of a great remedial Power, promised from the very date of the downfall, which was to deal a deadly blow at the source of our sorrow and our sin. Discipline and development in, with, and through evil seemed thus to be set upon us from the first as the distinctive note of our destiny.

The patriarchal period was the childhood of man. It was marked, as childhood is, by the absence of self-consciousness, by simplicity of life, by directness of guidance. Life was realistic and without abstract conceptions. It passed on, with the arrival

of the Mosaic period, from the nursery to the schoolroom. The precepts of a moral law, covering the main lines of individual conduct, were laid down. The claims of the Almighty on His creature were stated in their utmost breadth; and it seems difficult to deny that, through the institution of an elaborate sacrificial and sacerdotal system, there was planted in the Hebrew race a conception of sin, of the great and terrible curse of the world, which was probably an absolute precondition of any adequate conception of the corresponding redemption. This idea of sin and of the virulence of its poison was brought home with such force and depth and clearness to the general mind that while it was gradually effaced from the circle of ideas which prevailed* among the most cultivated nations of the earth; yet with the Hebrews, amid all the frightful aberrations of conduct and terrible vicissitudes of destiny, it subsisted, without abatement of vital force, down to the manifestation of our Lord. Of His teachings, wonderful to say, it needed not to be a portion, since it formed, jointly with monotheism, their ready made point of departure.

These great ideas, once established, were alike sustained, repaired, and refreshed by the perpetual voices of the Psalms, and by the intermittent, but most powerful, trumpet calls of the Prophets. Through all the stages of the dispensation, and all the utterances of the Divine oracles, there ran an unbroken thread of Messianic promise.† There was for the journey of generations through the ages, as well as for the momentary exodus from Egypt, a pillar of fire by night, and a pillar of cloud by day, leading up to the birth of Him in whom before and after were to unite, and the whole human race, one in its affliction, was to be made one in its deliverance. And when Dante built his material universe on Jerusalem as its centre, the physical error was the signification of the deepest of all truths, that the Life and Death of Christ were the one and only centre for the destinies of the world.

But this secret of the Lord, so marvelously kept, under a

*I leave apart the movement of the Stoics in the direction of a return to that idea, which would require a separate argument, especially upon the question whether it originally drew its inspiration from the translated Scriptures of the Hebrews.

† On the pervading and multiform character of this promise see a recent, as well as valuable authority, in the volume of Dr. Briggs, of the New York Theological Seminary, on "Messianic Prophecy."

guardianship so wayward, and seemingly so ineffective, was wholly a spiritual secret. There was at one time a habit of pointing to the Old Testament and the Jewish nation as the *matrix* of all human greatness, all mental excellence. There is still a tendency to glorify the Jewish Scriptures under the poor and narrow name of the Hebrew literature. Now, to my mind, it is a literature absolutely incommensurable with the literature of other lands. As compared with these, both its source and its aim were far higher, but they were also far more limited. Its mission was to touch humanity at its centre, but at its centre only. It was to work out, for its time and place, the highest part of the Providential design for the education of man. But other parts were left to other hands, and those other hands were, in the Divine Counsels, shaped and fitted for them. Under the coming Christian civilization, the whole nature of man in all its parts was for the first time to be trained, and the internal harmony and balance of those parts was to be restored and consolidated. It was a complex organization, of which the spiritual and ruling factor was made ready in Judea for use in the Christian Church, the Kingdom of God upon earth. What may be called in the widest sense the intellectual factor was matured elsewhere; it had its training chiefly among the Greeks. In preparation for the preaching of the Gospel, it was given to that unique race to establish an intellectual mastery, and an intellectual unity, by their literature and language, throughout the vast range of the Roman sway. It was through a concurrence surely not fortuitous that, at the time when our Saviour came into the world, the language of the Greeks had become its ruling language. I suppose it to be a question still open among the learned whether, and in what degree, the Saviour himself employed it in His ministry. But there is no doubt that it was the first and general channel for the propagation of his teaching, and that by those supple and elastic properties, which even now appear to be inseparable from its undying genius, it furnished admirably the form in which a Christian terminology was framed, and the new teaching was adapted, through the early creeds, to the apprehension and belief of man.

But the office of Greece in making ready the Gospel feast was not confined to supplying a form of language. She had also to supply a form of mind. Greece prepared the mold in which at the time, and down to our time, and as some may hope, for all

time, the mental culture of man was to take shape, and its principal conditions were to be determined.

There was one important particular of the new or Christian training, to which Greek religion and Greek art had a special affinity. It is not easy, perhaps, to trace with precision in the Old Testament the law of "graven images," of the corporal representation of living, and especially of human forms. I suppose there can be little doubt, first, that this law was originally adverse, and next, that it was, in whatever measure, modified by the Incarnation, which presented to our eyes Deity in human shape, and which hardly allows of the supposition that that shape was never to be reproduced.

Now, there was one country in the world where, for centuries before the Advent, it had been the prime pursuit of Art to associate deity with the human form; and, moreover, where this practice spontaneously grew out of the prevailing and fundamental idea of the established religion. This aim led the artist ever upward to surmount imperfection and to reach upward after perfection. And though the finite could not incorporate the infinite, yet, under this inspiration, actual performance was advanced to a point in the presentation of form, such as to supply a model for every country and every age.

With the three first objects of human quest, the good, the true, the great, there is associated a fourth, the beautiful, which is also indispensable in the full training of our nature. For the good, as such, the good in connection with God, its origin and basis; that is, the holy, the supreme grade in this fourfold scale, we have seen that the "evangelical preparation" (to use the phrase of Eusebius) was exhibited by the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which were the treasure and the glory of the Hebrew race. In the pursuit of the great and the true, and in establishing the laws of that pursuit, the principal share was given to Greece. With respect to the beautiful, her office was supreme, almost exclusive. Or, if we contemplate the process only as twofold, the Providential order was, that on the spiritual side we should draw from Hebrew sources, but that on the human or earthly side of mind and life, taken at large, the type was fashioned among the Greeks.

This was for the individual. But neither was the share of Greece a small one in the collective or political education of the

race. Not to speak of the scientific treatises of Aristotle and Plato, we have the earliest political ideas and practices of the Greeks recorded in the poems of Homer. The forms of those ideas and practices are only, so to speak, in the gristle. They had not hardened by use into shapes sufficiently defined for exact description. But, so far as spirit and essence are concerned, I know not where else in all antiquity to find a living exhibition so much in harmony with the fundamental conceptions, and even institutions, of the English-speaking races of the world.

At the same time it is clear that, so far as direct and actual preparation was concerned, this office, in the political sphere, was specially committed to the Romans. With them alone do we find organization both large and firm. Those ancient roads, so strong and well compacted, which bound mother earth much as she is now bound by the iron rail, which still defy the gnawing tooth of Time, and which furnished for the civilized world continuity of dwelling space, and unity of communications, were also an emblem of that higher unity, of which Rome laid the foundations in the well-knit system of its law, diffused throughout the world, and destined to remain an imperishable portion of the human patrimony.

This in the world of action. But there was a bond also in the world of thought between the Hellenic and the Latin. From Greece and the Grecian East, the sacred torch, so to speak, was handed over to Italy, and by a process which began with the rise of Roman literature, and ended with the *Renaissance*, the sister peninsula became, in due course, the mother of European letters. This great fact seems to have been forgotten, at least in England, by modern fashion; and there has, during our time, been a deplorable decline in the study of that illustrious literature which forms a link in the central chain of civilization and of history.

History, then, complex and diversified as it is, and presenting to our view many a ganglion of unpenetrated and perhaps impenetrable enigmas, is not a mere congeries of disjointed occurrences, but is the evolution of a purpose steadfastly maintained, and advancing towards some consummation, greater probably than what the world has yet beheld, along with the advancing numbers, power, knowledge, and responsibilities of the race. That purpose is not always and everywhere alike conspicuous; but is it not like the river in the limestone tract, which vanishes from the surface,

and works its way beneath, only to reappear with renovated force ? or like the sun, which returns to warm us after the appointed space of night,

And tricks his beams, and with new spangled ore
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky.*

Its parts are related to one another. The great lines of human destiny have every appearance of converging upon a point. As the Mosiac writer at the outset of Genesis declares the unity of the world, and as Doctor Whewell, in a passage of extraordinary magnificence, countersigns this testimony by predicting its catastrophe in the name of cosmic science ; as again the mind of an individual, by the use of reflection, often traces one pervading scheme of education in the experiences of his life ; so, probably for the race, certainly for its great central web of design, which runs unbroken from Adam to our day, there has been and is a profound unity of scheme well described by the poet Tennyson :

“ Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns.”†

“ At sundry times and in divers manners,” sometimes by conscious and sometimes by unconscious agency, this purpose is wrought out. Persons and nations who have not seen or known one another, nevertheless co-operate and contribute to a common fund, available for their descendants and themselves.

That, together with powers and resources, responsibilities must increase, is almost a truism. That there is such an increase in the sum total of powers and resources extraneous to ourselves appears also undeniable. It seems then, as if the Almighty Ruler were now raising His claims upon His creatures and demanding at least the larger usury which these larger gifts should earn. Whether there is a corresponding increase in the available brain forces of the world, and in its moral energies, is a question perhaps only to be answered with some qualification, even some mis-giving. But it will have been usefully put, if it lead us to bow ourselves down as in dust and ashes before the one Source of Strength, and if it remind us that the humblest man should also,

* Milton's *Lycidas*.

† Locksley Hall.

under the Christian dispensation, be the strongest man, though it is in a strength not his own.

When, indeed, we speak of the Christian dispensation, there starts up first of all the remembrance of its woful shortcomings in act, as compared with its glorious design. Yet does it offer a mass of net results, which can nowhere else be equaled, of which I will select two, the most comprehensive in their character. First, that in the precinct of Christendom is found the actual mastery of the world, where all that exists, exists in the main by its permission, or under its control. Secondly, that whereas other ruling powers and paramount forms of civilization have had, following upon their maturity, their "decline and fall," the question now seems at least an open one, whether the Advent and the Gospel have, for collective as well as individual man, "brought life and immortality to light;" in this sense, that the great Christian civilization presents many and perhaps conclusive signs of a progressive, though a chequered growth, without any decree set forth against it of a boundary or an end.

It may be said that the Christian testimony, on which that civilization is based, is now divided against itself. Supposing we allow that the Church for nine centuries spoke with the authority which attaches to a consent so wide, visible, and permanent that all discordant voices were either transitory or inaudible, and passed out of the reckoning. That form of authority no longer exists; it has been supplanted by divisions and subdivisions of communion and of tenet. But has not authority of another kind taken its place, the moral weight, namely, which attaches to the testimony of a number of witnesses having mutual feuds and conflicting interests, and yet speaking with one voice on the highest, broadest, and most profound of the matters which made up the great message of God to man?*

Turning now to the title of this paper, I remind the reader that the history of which it speaks is not the limited and fragmentary record commonly known under the name, but is nothing less than the sum total of human life and human experience, as lived and as gathered on the surface of the globe, within the lines already laid down. And here arises my concluding ques-

* Dr. Möhler, in the *Symbolik*, has, by his explanation of the grand difference between the earlier and the later Christian controversies, made a valuable contribution to the examination of this important subject.

tion. If in history, thus understood, there is an unity, should there not be a reflection of that unity in study? As every straw and ear in the cornfield promotes the design of the husbandman, should we not, each in our several sphere, however humbly, strive to promote in our studies the design of the Master and Maker of the world? To every man, obviously, this is open in the sphere of action. Nay, there is none who can avoid either promoting or obstructing it; for every one must of necessity, by his own doings, add to, or take away from, the sum total of goodness and of happiness, of evil and of sorrow, in the world. It seems to me that what we *must* do in the world of action, we at least *may* do in the world of thought; those of us, I mean, whose field of labor belongs to or includes that world. Take any branch of mental effort, be it what it may, educative, creative, inquisitive, or materially productive, none should be pursued without a purpose, and all real purpose, though it may be atomic, is permanent and indestructible. All bear upon human relations and the conditions of life, and each, unless unnaturally bound down to the merest inanity, should have its place in the great design. The farmer, said Mr. Emerson, is man upon the farm. Each writer is bettering (if he be not worsening) the thought, the frame, or the experience of man, upon the subject on which he writes, works, or teaches; he is enlarging the text; he is extending the bounds of the common inheritance. A fire of aspiration should prompt him in his labor, and its warmth will be part of his reward. That Shield of Achilles, to which I return once more, was a collection of compartments. To some one of those compartments was assorted each part of human life and action. Even so there is now a place, perhaps a larger place than ever, in the grand Providential order for all we seek or find, think or do. For all of it there will be, if only such be our desire, a compartment ready to receive it, in the framework made ready by the Eternal Workman; and it will contribute truly, though it may be infinitesimally, to the accomplishment of His all-comprehending plan.

W. E. GLADSTONE.